

David Tai Loy K. Ho #42  
January 14, 1985

Q: Mr. Ho when did you first join the Honolulu Fire Department?

A: (tape slips)

Q: What kind of money did the Fire Department pay in those days?

A: (tape slips) was paying (ts) a month. But they was (ts) to raise it to (ts) the bill would pass (ts) job as a fireman (ts) was making (ts) twenty(c)five dollars working for (ts) (ts)

Q: (ts) When you first joined the Fire Department, (ts) what kind of work did you do there? What kind of duties did you have?

A: (ts) fireman you take the low (ts) uh (ts) (ts... repeatedly) you do your housework, and of course every new fireman take care of the dorm (the mens dorm, you know.); sweeping, mopping. And they had spittoons left in those days and you had to polish spittoons every Friday, which was polish the.... (laughter) So we train every day. As a new fireman you train every day that you came on duty, which is every other day. And they train you use of the tools, different kind of hose, how to climb the ladder; all in a period of about a month, until the Captain saw that you proficient.

Q: After you finished that training, what were you assigned to do?

A: Well, we... as far as the old days, firemen wasn't given too much extra work, extra training. Besides the personalized training on the job, he was scheduled to go on inspection in the community and check the hydrants, and inspect the areas where there are likely to be fire hazards (like the restaurants, hotels), to familiarize the new men with the location of the hydrants, the possible entry into the restaurants or hotels. As compared with another Company which responds also, that we'd take our own route to the fire and the other Company would take the opposite route. So at least one Company would reach in case there's an accident.

Q: By the time 1941 came around, what was your.... did you have a regular assigned job?

A: 1941, I was stationed at Kakaako but initially I was in Central. When the person decide he replaces another person who's promoted, I became a firefighter and the person who's promoted became an engineer. So he sent to another person, the engineer was promoted to a Lt., maybe out in Waipahu, so the process continues. And uh, from Central I was sent to Waikiki. I replaced another firefighter. There was a shortage of firefighters who was placed on inspection. His name was Louie Watson. And uh, they had no paying position for an Inspector, so

they pulled two men off Waikiki Station which is Number 7 Company, one on each Force to do the inspection work, and after that transferred me to Kakaako. That was in 1941... early 1941.

Q: What Company were you with then?

A: I was at Waikiki which is Number 7 Company and then when I transferred to Kakaako, I was transferred to Engine 9 under the Number 2 watch with Lt. Dan Kawuiki(?) as a hoseman.

Q: Were you on duty at the Station on December 7th, 1941?

A: On December 7th, it was my off day and I was at home.

Q: Where was that?

A: I was living in Waimanalo, on Homestead, right across the beach. We changed watch... during those days we changed watch at 6:00 in the evening. And I got up in the morning, and I was building my home and working on my front steps when my neighbor yelled across to me and said that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor. And I said, "How did you know?" and he said "Turn on your radio!" I turned on my radio and sure enough, there was an announcement: All firemen and policemen report back to duty! And when I came out and got all my clothing, I could see that there was smoke coming out from Bellows Field, not Bellows Field I mean... Kaneohe Airfield. They had bombed the planes over there and way out in the distance I could see black smoke. Looked like an oil tank was burning. And I went to town and I reported back to my Officer. I reached town... it must have been about 8:00 in the morning.